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QUESTION OF PALESTINE
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES
ELIMINATION OF RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Identical letters dated 19 January 1998 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

On 14 January 1998, the Israeli Government took a decision establishing that "Israel's vital and national interests in Judea, Samaria and the Jordan Valley" would constitute the basis of the interim agreement of the final status agreement with the Palestinians. The Government's decision further enumerates the components of these "vital interests" to include "the eastern security zone; the western security zone; the area surrounding the Jerusalem region; the areas of the Israeli communities; infrastructure interests, including water, electricity and transportation; military-security sites of strategic importance or pertinent to Israel's deterrence capability; the areas around longitudinal and lateral transportation routes vital to general security and to the security of the Israeli communities; and historic sites sacred to the Jewish people".

This decision which comes prior to the expected visits to Washington, D.C., by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Yasser Arafat, represents a grave breach of the existing agreements between the two sides and, if maintained, will definitely bury the Middle East peace process. The mere use of terminology such as "Judea and Samaria" instead of the West Bank and "Israeli communities" instead of Israeli settlements and the invention of "vital interests", in addition to being illegal, clearly illustrate the essence of Israeli positions in this regard.

The decision also represents a new indication of the expansionist policies of the current Israeli Government, which are the absolute antithesis of making peace. The decision mocks Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and the principle of land for peace. The real intentions of this current Government are obviously not to implement the existing agreements or to proceed with the current peace process. The Palestinian side holds the Israeli Government fully responsible for the ensuing repercussions of that decision and other such decisions and actions.

I would also like to refer to the letter, dated 8 January 1998, from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/52/762), which in our opinion indicates total political bankruptcy on the part of the Israeli Government. It is very difficult to understand the conclusions made in the letter after the extensive effort to compile such quotations, mostly made by the media. It becomes even harder to understand in the context of the relationship between the Israeli occupiers and the occupied Palestinians, and Israel's systematic violation of international law, Security Council resolutions and all the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, let alone the existing anti-Arab, anti-Palestinian campaign on the Israeli side, including an avalanche of explicit statements by many Israeli officials.

Moreover, it is saddening, at least from an intellectual point of view, to witness representatives of an Israeli Government using anti-Semitism as a political tool for tactical purposes, such as justifying Israeli positions vis-à-vis the Palestinian side within the Middle East peace process. The Middle East is clearly in need of much more responsible and mature approaches, as well as greater sensitivity towards both the past and the present.

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36, 37, 87 and 110 of the fifty-second session, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nasser AL-KIDWA
Permanent Observer of Palestine
to the United Nations